



Interview Transcript

Christopher Chung

Ryo Tabusa: Thank you very much for joining us. If I could just get you to start by introducing yourself and who you're playing in this production.

Christopher Chung: My name's Chris and I'm going to be playing Abraham, Paris and Prince Escalus.

RT: Great. Is this your first time at a performance at Shakespeare's Globe?

CC: It is actually, it's my first Shakespeare altogether.

RT: Oh right! How are you finding it so far?

CC: I thought it would be more overwhelming, it's not. The first week we spent going through all of the text, really in depth. So it's made me feel really comfortable and I think the biggest thing with Shakespeare is understanding it so that you can command it. So I feel quite in control now, which is quite nice, coming into staging. So it's good, yes.

RT: And have you had a chance to be on the stage?

CC: So the first day of rehearsal, we had a tour of the Globe. It's called the Heaven and Hell tour, so you go all the way up to the top of the stage and then all the way down under. And we walked out onto the stage for the first time and it's one of the most overwhelming things I think I've done as an actor. It's very, very powerful to step out there; it's like stepping out into the Colosseum or like an arena. And you look out and you can only just imagine what it must be like with all the faces looking up at you. It's very exciting, very, very exciting.

RT: What was your relationship to Shakespeare when learning it in school?

CC: Personally, I probably had more of a want to learn more about him than my friends. Because I always knew that I wanted to go into acting and I knew that it was quite important. I think as auditions started to come in and you look at auditions differently, but I think a lot of my friends that are actors now, they look at them if it's a Shakespeare and they just get completely overwhelmed just because it feels like it's this untouchable thing. But it's not, it's just everything that you would say in a normal script but said really in more depth. And once you break it down, there is actually no better way to say the words that he's written.

RT: Right, of course. Yes!

CC: So I think going through it in school, it never really felt that overwhelming because the teachers break it down for you, they make it very accessible.

RT: So tell us a little bit about your first impressions of your character so far.

CC: I think finding them is always a process, no matter what the play is. For this one particularly, it's quite deceptive I think because Abraham at the start of the play, he has the least amount of dialogue that I have to learn.



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CC: So when you're reading it on page, you look at things like, "Oh that's quite simple". But when you go to act it, you always want your character to have a complete backstory so that it will read for your audience and also so that you understand what you're doing on stage. So you're not just going there, saying your line, and then moving on to your exit.

So investing a lot of your imaginative, creative tools into creating something for that character where the text doesn't give it to you necessarily, that takes a lot of energy. So yes, he's coming up to be quite a loyal kinsman to the Montague family.

And then the Prince, he wants to keep the order of everything that's going on in Verona. So as you go through the play, you'll see that he gets more and more fed up with the goings on between the Montague's and Capulet's.

And Paris his...well, it's an unrequited love isn't it?

RT: Yes.

CC: Which I think like a lot of people can probably relate to. I quite enjoy playing him because I see a lot of myself in him as well. Because he's quite proper in his going about of wooing Juliet and it just never lands for him...which is a really sad commentary on my life!

RT: Both the Prince and Paris are sort of a step away from the conflict, whereas so many of the other characters are either in the middle of it or trying to avoid it.

CC: Yes.

RT: How does it feel to be able to play those characters who are apart from that?

CC: I was thinking this the other day actually. Because you don't actually side with any one family particularly, I mean I guess Paris has a loyalty to the Capulet's because he's going to marry their daughter. But really, they're not caught up in the feud at all.

The Prince very much sees things as they are: they've been creating civil unrest within his state so his main prerogative is just to keep the order, so that the whole town doesn't fall into disrepair. I think it's quite nice to be on the outside and look in, but it is also a little bit harder to create your point of view as to where your loyalties lie, which I think for an actor you have to invest creatively into like what does that mean for you and how you're going to play everything.

RT: So we're in the early weeks of rehearsals, what have been some of the highlights so far?



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CC: Definitely walking out on to the Globe stage, that was probably the biggest highlight and something I'll probably carry with me for for a long time.

RT: Ah, that's great.

CC: When the doors flew open! And just walking out with your company as well, with the Romeo and Juliet company and then taking a line in front of the stage, it's probably one of the most powerful things I've ever done.

So that's definitely been a highlight and I think getting to know everyone as well. You always step into a rehearsal room with the slight sense of anxiety about who are these people that you're going to have to spend a lot of time with for the next two months and show a lot and be very personal with very quickly.

So the people, the people have been definitely a highlight. Michael [Oakley] is a brilliant director, he's very nurturing and just making sure that we all understand everything that's going on within Romeo and Juliet. And I think as well, looking at the play in a completely different way that I had never done before. Seeing things that when I was studying it many ions ago, that I never saw until I went through and I was like, "Oh wow!"

And because this version is abridged, all the referencing back to the First Quarto and the things that Michael has taken out of that and put into what you see in our production today, they're all the really necessary things, that's been really great to see why he's decided to do or to cut the play in such a way to present the most clear version for the audience.

RT: You're saying you're getting to know it now in a way you didn't before. Is that because performing performing versus reading?

CC: Yes, absolutely. I mean Shakespeare wrote the plays to be performed, didn't he? They weren't meant to be sat down and just looked at and studied word for word at a desk; they are meant to be spoken, and the more that you can speak, the more sense you will make out of them.

RT: So we've spoken about some of your highlights. What are you most looking forward to in the coming weeks of rehearsals and performances?

CC: I can't wait to get up on stage in costume, I think that's going to be really special. Because I always think that once you're in your costume, you really get to envelop your character, you really get to explore what their physicality is more so. Because the clothes really do heighten your performance in such a way. So I'm really looking forward to the outfits. Everyone has some really brilliant costumes, because they've all been made for us from scratch which is great.



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RT: I can see some of them around us no. They look wonderful.

CC: Yes, super high-fashion which is so not who I am! It's always nice to be able to wear things that you don't normally wear. And I just think starting to play, to play in that stage, to get the feeling. I guess when you're playing the Globe, it's unlike any other theatre as well. It's kind of like the next character in the show and you can't really imagine what that's like until you're out there, I think.

RT: Right.

CC: So yes, it's like the fifth Beatle, getting to be on the Globe stage! So I'm very much looking forward to that.

RT: Brilliant. Well thank you so much for joining us today and we look forward to catching up with you later in the run.

CC: Cool, thank you!